



Ready to Protect, Proud to Serve

Phone: 520-791-4852

Fax: 520-791-4433

270 S. Stone Avenue

Tucson, Arizona 85701-1917

<http://www.tucsonaz.gov/police>

On-call PIO: tucsonpdpio@gmail.com

Media Release



Roberto A. Villaseñor

Chief of Police

Date: August 23, 2011

Contact: Sgt. Matt Ronstadt

METAL RECYCLING BUSINESS BUYING STOLEN MATERIALS 1525 WEST MIRACLE MILE

*****UPDATE – AUGUST 25, 2011*****

During the course of the investigation, a total of **5 confirmed, stolen vehicles were recovered** on the property. Three of the vehicles had been reported as stolen to the Tucson Police Department, and the other two vehicles had been reported as stolen to the Arizona Department of Public Safety. Numerous other items of evidentiary value, including computers and related equipment, records and other documentation, etc. were also recovered from the property. There were 4 adult males arrested as a result of the investigation. They were booked into the Pima County Jail. Each was charged with **1 count of Operating a Chop Shop, a Class 2 Felony**. The males were identified as **Hector Fuentes (52-years old), Marco Acuna (40-years old), Salvador Hernandez-Perez (23-years old), and Cesar Tovar (58-years old)**. Please note, no photo is available for Mr. Tovar. The booking photographs for Mr. Fuentes, Mr. Acuna, and Mr. Hernandez-Perez are included below. The investigation continues, and additional charges may be forth coming.



Hector Fuentes



Marco Acuna



Salvador Hernandez-Perez

Sgt. Maria Hawke August 25, 2011

For accommodations; materials in accessible formats; foreign language interpreters; and/or materials in a language other than English, please contact the Tucson Police Department Public Information Office at (520) 791-4852 or (520) 791-2639 for TDD at least five (5) business days in advance. Para arreglos; materiales en formatos accesibles; interpretes de idioma extranjero; y/o materiales en otro idioma que no sea inglés, por favor comunicarse al Departamento de la Policía de Tucson a la sección de Información Pública al (520) 791-4852 o (520) 791-2639 para TDD por lo menos con cinco (5) días hábiles de anticipación.

On August 23, 2011, the Tucson Police Department's Auto Theft Unit served a search warrant at **Metal Management**, located at 1525 West Miracle Mile. This search warrant was the culmination of a long-term investigation into this business' practice of purchasing questionable and even obviously stolen materials. The investigation was carried out with the cooperation and assistance of multiple agencies, including the Arizona Attorney General, National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB), Arizona Vehicle Theft Task Force (AVTTF), Counter Narcotics Alliance (CNA), Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) Enforcement, and the Tucson Police Fraud and Surveillance Units.

In 2006 Tucson Police Department became aware that there was an issue with the recycled metal industry, throughout the state, concerning purchasing stolen motor vehicles as scrap metal. Since that time various approaches to assess and address the situation were employed including education, law changes, and enforcement.

In 2007, the Department's Auto Theft Unit became aware of such an issue at a particular metal recycler, Metal Management at 1525 W. Miracle Mile. That business purchases and recycles vehicles, wire and other metal items. In the following years it became apparent that the business was violating numerous laws and regulations related to the inspection, acceptance, and purchase of vehicles and property brought in as scrap metal.

In conjunction with the aforementioned agencies, the Tucson Police Department launched an undercover operation that involved bringing simulated stolen vehicles, ATM's, safes, and wire into Metal Management. All vehicles and property presented to the business during the undercover operation were purchased by the business without proper inspection or reporting as required by law. There were over 15 loads of simulated stolen property purchased by Metal Management throughout the course of the investigation.

On August 23rd 2011, the Auto Theft Unit served a search warrant on the business with the assistance of investigators and personnel assigned to several of the involved agencies. Evidence was recovered and several arrests were made. This case is ongoing and additional follow-up investigation will continue into the practices of Metal Management and it's employees and management.

While metal theft in the Tucson area has been a significant problem for the community over the past several years, it is a problem that would not exist to this scale were it not for the unscrupulous and sometimes criminal business practices of some scrap metal businesses. Metal Management is one of the largest metal recycling businesses in the Tucson area. By conducting this operation, the Department anticipates a measurable impact on the rate of metal theft in Tucson, as metal thieves will need to work harder to find a willing buyer of stolen property.

The Tucson Police Department plans to continue to monitor and enforce scrap metal laws and regulations with all metal recyclers in the Tucson community. The Department is providing a list of tips for both recyclers and owners of vehicles to prevent future violations and to ensure that stolen vehicles cannot be easily disposed of. These tips will be posted to the Tucson Police Department's public Internet page, where it can serve as a readily available resource.

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A copy of surveillance video taken of one of the vehicles being inspected and accepted at the business during the operation is being provided.

Tucson on average recovers about 60-70% of its stolen vehicles. Last year 69% were recovered (3354 stolen, 2336 recovered).

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